

II. Amendments to the Specification

Please replace paragraph **[0004]** with the following amended paragraph:

[0004] The present invention provides a dual hole punch with a substantially horizontal engaging surface for perforating at least one sheet of paper with dual non-circular holes adapted to receive a two-prong fastener. The dual hole punch includes a base plate having an engaging surface for substantially horizontal paper engagement, a guide bracket having a first portion fixedly mounted to a first portion of the engaging surface and having the second portion extending adjacent to and spaced apart from a second portion of the engaging surface to define a substantially horizontal slot having a wall surface therebetween, where the second portion of the guide bracket includes a first and second bore extending therethrough and perpendicular to the engaging surface. The dual hole punch also includes a lever arm pivotally mounted to the guide bracket and having a first and second bearing surface, a first punch disposed in the first bore and a second punch disposed in the second bore. Each of the first and second punches include a top end surface engagedly coupled to their respective bearing surfaces of the lever arm, and an opposing bottom end non-circular cutting surface. When the lever is actuated towards the base plate, the bottom end non-circular cutting surfaces of the first and second punch perforate the sheet(s) of paper with non-circular holes. A center of the bottom end non-circular cutting surface of the first punch is positioned about two and three quarters inches from

a center of the bottom end non-circular cutting surface of the second punch to accommodate the two-prong fastener.

Please replace paragraph **[0008]** with the following amended paragraph:

[0008] FIGURE 2 is ~~top view of the exemplary dual hole punch of FIG. 1~~ a cross-sectional view taken along line 2-2 of FIG. 1;

Please replace paragraph **[0009]** with the following amended paragraph:

[0009] FIGURE 3 is ~~a cut-away side view of the exemplary dual hole punch of FIG. 1 in a non-engaged position~~ a cross-sectional view taken along line 3-3 of FIG. 1;

Please replace paragraph **[0011]** with the following amended paragraph:

[0011] FIGURE 5 is a top view of a ~~rectangular perforation pattern created in a sheet of paper by first punch and die set of~~ the exemplary dual hole punch of FIG. 1 configured to cause dual rectangular perforations;

Please replace paragraph **[0012]** with the following amended paragraph:

[0012] FIGURE 6 is a top view of an ~~oval perforation pattern created in a sheet of paper by~~ a second punch and die set of the exemplary dual hole punch of FIG. 1 configured to cause dual elongated oval perforations;

Please replace paragraph **[0013]** with the following amended paragraph:

[0013] FIGURE 7 is a top view of a third punch and die set of D-shaped perforation pattern created in a sheet of paper by the exemplary dual hole punch of FIG.1 configured to cause dual D-shaped perforations;

Please replace paragraph **[0014]** with the following amended paragraph:

[0014] FIGURE 8 is a top view of a fourth punch and die set of modified D-shaped perforation pattern created in a sheet of paper by the exemplary dual hole punch of FIG.1 configured to cause dual modified D-shaped perforations;

Please replace paragraph **[0021]** with the following amended paragraph:

[0021] The dual hole punch 10 also includes a lever arm 34, and dual punches 36 and 38 disposed in the first and second bores 30, 32, respectively. The first punch 36 has a top end surface 44 and an opposing bottom end non-circular cutting surface 46 (see, FIG. 3). Similarly, the second punch 38 has a top end surface 48 and an opposing bottom end non-circular cutting surface 50 (not separately shown).

Please replace paragraph **[0022]** with the following amended paragraph:

[0022] The lever arm 34 is pivotally mounted to the guide bracket 16 and includes a first bearing surface 40 to engage the first punch 36 and a second bearing surface 42 to engage the second punch 38. The first bearing surface 40 extends outwardly from a first planar side wall ~~52~~ 54 of the lever arm 34 to engage the top end surface 44 of the first punch 36. The second bearing

surface 42 extends outwardly from a second planar side wall 54 ~~56~~ of the lever arm 34 to engage the top end surface 48 of the second punch 38.

Please replace paragraph **[0025]** with the following amended paragraph:

[0025] Two springs 64, 66 are disposed around the first and second punches 36, 38, respectively, and are adapted to enable reciprocal linear movement of the first and second punches 36, 38, and reciprocal rotational movement the lever arm 34. A first end of the first spring 64 is coupled to a ~~first lip~~ top surface of a first bushing 68, radially disposed in the first bore 30, and a second end of the first spring 64 is coupled to a radially extending flange 70 disposed proximate to the top end surface 44 of the first punch 36 (see, FIG. 3). Similarly, a first end of the second spring 66 is coupled to a ~~second lip~~ top surface of a second bushing 72 (not separately shown), radially disposed in the second bore 32, and a second end of the second spring 66 is coupled to a radially extending flange 74 (not separately shown) disposed proximate to the top end surface 46 of the second punch 38. It should be noted that although only the first punch, tip (non-circular cutting surface), bore and spring assembly is illustrated in detail, the second punch, tip, bore and spring assembly is identically configured and operable.

Please replace paragraph **[0026]** with the following amended paragraph:

[0026] The engaging surface 14 of the base plate 12 includes a first and second die ~~50~~ 49, 52 disposed therein and aligned with the punches 36, 38. The first die

~~50~~ 49 defines an aperture configured to receive the bottom end non-circular cutting surface 46 of the first punch 36. Similarly, the second die 52 defines an aperture configured to receive the bottom end non-circular cutting surface ~~50~~ of the second punch 38.

Please replace paragraph **[0027]** with the following amended paragraph:

[0027] During operation, when in the dual hole punch 10 is not engaged, the bottom end non-circular cutting surfaces ~~46, 50~~ of the first and second punches 36, 38 are retracted into their respective bores (positioned above the slot 26 of FIG. 3), thereby allowing the paper to be aligned under the first and second punches 36, 38. When in the dual hole punch 10 is engaged via downward actuation of the lever 34, the bottom end non-circular cutting surfaces ~~46, 50~~ travel through the horizontally positioned sheet of paper to the first and second dies ~~50~~ 49, 52, below. When the lever 34 is released, the biasing forces of the first and second springs return the lever arm 34 to the non-engaged position. Accordingly, the paper is perforated with non-circular perforation patterns determined by the non-circular shape of the cutting surfaces ~~46, 50~~. FIGURE 3 is a ~~cut-away side view of the exemplary dual hole punch 10 in a non-engaged position~~ cross-sectional view taken along line 3-3 of FIG. 1. FIGURE 4 is a cut-away side view of the exemplary dual hole punch of FIG.1 in an engaged position.

Please replace paragraph **[0028]** with the following amended paragraph:

[0028] FIGS. 5-8 are ~~top views of non-circular perforation patterns created in a sheet of paper by the bottom end non-circular cutting surfaces 46, 50 of the first and second punches 36, 38~~ different punch and die sets of the exemplary dual hole punch 10 of FIG.1. FIG. 5 illustrates a ~~rectangular pattern~~ first punch and die set configured to cause dual rectangular perforations, FIG. 6 illustrates an ~~elongated oval pattern~~ a second punch and die set configured to cause dual elongated oval perforations, FIG. 7 illustrates a “D-shaped” pattern a third punch and die set configured to cause dual D-shaped perforations, and FIG. 8 illustrates a ~~modified “modified D-shaped” pattern~~ fourth punch and die set configured to cause dual modified D-shaped perforations where the curved portions of the “D” are replaced with straight segments. It is contemplated that other suitable non-circular shapes may be utilized.

Please replace paragraph **[0029]** with the following amended paragraph:

[0029] The centers of the bottom end non-circular cutting surfaces 46, 50 of the first and second punches 36, 38, respectively, are preferably spaced two and three-quarters inches apart to align with standard two-prong fastener devices, however, other distances are contemplated. Likewise, each of the non-circular perforations created by the bottom end non-circular cutting surfaces 46, 50 of the first and second punches 36, 38 are preferably one-quarter of an inch in height to align with standard two-prong fastener devices, however, other heights are contemplated. In addition, although described as having a first and second punch 36, 38, it is contemplated that the dual hole punch may be expanded to a

tri hole punch including three, a quad hole punch including four punches, etc., having bottom end non-circular cutting surfaces.

Please replace paragraph **[0035]** with the following amended paragraph:

[0035] The dual hole punch 100 also includes a side back plate 114 having an engagement surface 116 extending in a substantially vertical direction. A lower portion 118 of the side back plate 114 is adjacent to and spaced apart from the second upper portion 110 of the guide bracket 106. Thus, the wall surface 112 of the guide bracket 106, the second upper portion 110 of the guide bracket 106 and the lower portion 118 of the side back plate 114 form a slot 120 adapted to support sheet(s) of paper in the substantially vertical direction. Although configured with an angle approximately 20 degrees from the vertical, the engagement surface 116 may be configured in one of an infinite number of suitable angles from the vertical to enable gravity assisted placement of sheet(s) of paper in the dual hole punch 100.

Please replace paragraph **[0037]** with the following amended paragraph:

[0037] The dual hole punch 100 further includes a punch assembly, mounted in the guide bracket 116, that is operable as described in connection with the dual hole punch 10 having the substantially horizontal engagement surface. The punch assembly of the dual hole punch 100 includes a first and second punch where each punch includes a top end surface and an opposing bottom end non-circular cutting surface. Unlike, the dual hole punch 10, however, the first and

second dies of the dual hole punch 100 are located in the side back plate 114 rather than in the base plate 102. Thus, the first and second dies are adapted to receive the bottom end non-circular cutting surfaces of the first and second punches, respectively, as the first and second punches are driven towards the side plate by the punch assembly.

Please replace paragraph **[0039]** with the following amended paragraph:

[0039] A first and second spring, configured and operable as described in connection with the dual hole punch 10, are disposed around the first and second punches of the dual hole punch 100 and bias the first and second punches of the dual hole punch 100 away from the side back plate 114.

Please replace paragraph **[0040]** with the following amended paragraph:

[0040] The dual hole punch 100 may also include an adjustable paper guide assembly mounted to the side back plate 114 and adapted to position the sheet(s) of paper into a desired alignment as described in connection with the dual hole punch 10. Unlike the dual hole punch 10 however, each of the first and second rod assemblies of the dual hole punch 100 are adapted for linear reciprocal movement within aligned apertures in opposing sides of the side back plate 114 rather than base plate 102. In addition to the rod assemblies described above, it is contemplated that the paper positioning within the dual hole punch 100 may be accomplished via a lengthened engagement surface 116 having reciprocally moveable dual guide elements mounted thereon.

Please replace paragraph **[0041]** with the following amended paragraph:

[0041] During operation, when in the dual hole punch 100 is not engaged, the bottom end non-circular cutting surfaces of the first and second punches are retracted into the first and second bores of the guide bracket 106. This allows the paper ~~the~~ to be positioned, under the influence of gravitational forces, into proper alignment with the first and second punches. When in the dual hole punch 100 is engaged via downward actuation of the lever 130, the bottom end non-circular cutting surfaces of the first and second punches travel through the substantially vertically positioned sheet of paper and into the first and second dies below. When the lever arm ~~34~~ 130 is released, the biasing forces of the first and second springs return the lever arm ~~34~~ 130 to the non-engaged position. Accordingly, the paper is perforated with non-circular perforation patterns determined by the non-circular shape of the cutting surfaces of the punches.